

# Hearing the Names of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas in the Pure Land Sūtras\*

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## Abstract

This paper is a study on the doctrine of “hearing the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas” in the Pure Land sūtras, focusing on the earliest version of the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* sūtra, the *Da amituo jing*, and the *Guan wuliangshou fo jing*. This issue will be approached in the following ways: firstly, I will commence with a discussion of “hearing the name of the Buddha” in those special characteristics found in the Dharmākara narrative of the *Da amituo jing*; secondly, I will discuss the formation of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> vows in terms of “hearing the name of the Buddha;” thirdly, I will undertake a preliminary discussion on the characteristics of “hearing the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas” found in the *Guan wuliangshou fo jing*, and the connections between the *Guan wuliangshou fo jing* and the *Da amituo jing* on the basis of these characteristics.

**Key-words:** hearing the names of the Buddha/ Amitābha/ *Guan-yin*/ the *Da amituo jing*/ the *Guanjing*

## Introduction

This paper is a preliminary study on the doctrine of “hearing the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas” in the Pure Land sūtras. Although there have been only a few research fruits regarding this theme in the field,<sup>(1)</sup> the research regarding the formation of the Pure Land sūtras has made significant progress during these years, and older papers were not considered connected with other characteristics found in the earliest version of the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* sūtra, the *Foshuo amituo sanyesanfosalou guodurendao jing* 佛說阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓過度人道經 (T.12, No. 362, hereafter the *Da amituo jing*, or *siglum*: 大阿).<sup>(2)</sup> Moreover, the doctrine of “hearing the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas”<sup>(3)</sup> found in the *Foshuo guan wuliangshou fo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經 (T.12, No. 365, hereafter the *Guanjing*, or *siglum*: 觀經) has not been discussed by anyone, as far as I am aware. Furthermore, according to my recent research,<sup>(4)</sup> the marked difference between the *Da amituo jing* and the later versions is that there is a set practice system found in *Da amituo jing*. Although the oldest Sanskrit manuscript of the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* among the remaining thirty-nine was regarded as having been formed as late as in the twelfth century,<sup>(5)</sup> about seven-hundred years later than the period of translating of the *Da amituo jing*, it is hard to believe that this phenomenon affected the evolution process of the

manuscripts formed in different periods and regions. With the translation of the *Da amituo jing*, a set practice system, whose intention is highlighting the cultivation of self-benefit and benefit for others as realised through the practice of the six *pāramitās*, is carefully compiled into the sūtra so that it has become the most significant characteristic of it. And it appears that the doctrine of “hearing the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas”<sup>(6)</sup> as one of the methods of producing benefit for others is highlighted in the *Da amituo jing* and must have had an influence on the *Guanjing*. Accordingly, it is necessary to reconsider the doctrine of “hearing the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas” in the Pure Land sūtras.<sup>(7)</sup> This paper aims to make some progress towards this goal.

### 1. The origin of the “hearing Amitābha’s name” in the *Da amituo jing*

In the *Da amituo jing*, the doctrine of “hearing Amitābha’s name” begins with the Dharmākara narrative which is markedly different compared to its later versions. According to my recent study, instead of being a genuine translation representing the earliest form of the Lager *Sukhāvatīvyūha* sūtra as commonly believed by scholars, the Dharmākara narrative was purposely compiled by its Chinese translator based on his own views. The most essential element in the narrative contained in the *Da amituo jing* consists of the following 129 characters.

【大阿】(1) 我欲求佛為菩薩道, 令我後作佛時, 於八方、上下諸無央數佛中, 最尊、智慧勇猛、頭中光明如佛光明所照無極; 所居國土, 自然七寶極自軟好; (2) 令我後作佛時, 教授名字, 皆聞八方、上下無央數佛國, 莫不聞知我名字者; 諸無央數天人民及蜎飛蠕之類諸來生我國者, 悉皆令作菩薩、阿羅漢無央數都勝諸佛國。如是者寧可得不可得?<sup>(8)</sup> (T.12, pp.300 c-301 a)

These special 129 characters play a significant role in that some important vows, which can help us to determine the translator’s intention, are deliberately contained in it. It consists of two parts, and the first part, which begins with the words 我欲求佛為菩薩道 and ends with the words 自然七寶極自軟好, concerns self-benefit for Dharmākara himself. The second part, which begins with the words 令我後作佛時教授名, focuses on “benefit for others,” that is for all sentient beings, in the measureless Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, above and below, who have heard his name. It is worth noting that the words regarding “hearing the Buddha’s name” have been repeatedly highlighted -two times- in the second part of these 129 characters. Accordingly, “hearing my name” is a crucially beneficial way of saving beings who aspire to be reborn in the Land of Amitābha. That is to say, these special 129 characters were purposely compiled with some significant items so that Dharmākara’s original vows, self-benefit and benefit for others, can be fulfilled through saving those “hearing the Buddha’s names”.

## 2. “Hearing Amitābha’s name” in the vows of the *Da amituo jing*

### 2.1 The 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing*

In the *Da amituo jing*, only two vows, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> contain the words “聞我名字.” The 4<sup>th</sup> vow is as follows.

【大阿】第四願：使某作佛時，(I) 令我名字，皆聞八方，上下無央數佛國。(II) 皆令諸佛各於比丘僧大坐中，說我功德國土之善；(III) 諸天、人民、蜎飛蠕動之類聞我名字，莫不慈心。<sup>(9)</sup>歡喜踊躍者，皆令來生我國。得是願乃作佛，不得是願終不作佛。<sup>(10)</sup> (T.12, p.301 b 08-13)

According to KAGAWA, the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* consists of two elements: the first element starts with the words 說我功德國土之善, which correspond to the first part of the 17<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing*, the 17<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Wuliangshou jing*, and the *Rulaihui*, and the Sanskrit version;<sup>(11)</sup> the second part of the 4<sup>th</sup> corresponds to the second part of the 17<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing*, the 18<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Wuliangshou jing* and the *Rulaihui*, and the 19<sup>th</sup> vow of the Sanskrit version.<sup>(12)</sup> On the other hand, according to ŌTA, the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* corresponds to the 17<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing*, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> vows of the *Wuliangshou jing* and the *Rulaihui*, and the 17<sup>th</sup> vow of the Sanskrit version.<sup>(13)</sup> I would like to determine that the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* consists of three items. This conclusion matches my recent research conclusion, according to which some of the vows in the *Da amituo jing* consist of two or more items. However, it is particularly noteworthy that the feature that some of the vows consist of two or more items, is one of special characteristics in the *Da amituo jing*, regarded to have been the purposely revised by the translator.<sup>(14)</sup> Regarding the corresponding relationship between the 4<sup>th</sup> vow and its counterpart in other versions, See XZAO (forthcoming b). In addition, the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* quite corresponds to the second part of those special 129 characters of the Dharmākara narrative of the *Da amituo jing*.<sup>(15)</sup> Its counterpart in the *Pingdengjue jing* is the 17<sup>th</sup> vow which is as follows.

【清淨】十七、(I) 我作佛時，令我名聞八方上下無數佛國，諸佛各於弟子眾中歎我功德、國土之善。(II) 諸天、人民、蠕動之類聞我名字，皆悉踊躍來生我國；不爾者，我不作佛。<sup>(16)</sup> (T.12, p.281 b 27-c 01)

The counterpart in the *Wuliangshou jing* is found in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> vows. The 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> vows are as follows.

【無量】設我得佛，十方世界無量諸佛不悉諮嗟稱我名者，不取正覺。<sup>(17)</sup> (T.12, p.268 a 25)

The 18th vow of the *Wuliangshou jing* is as follows.

【無量】設我得佛，十方眾生至心信樂欲生我國，乃至十念，若不生者，不取正覺，唯除五逆，誹謗正法<sup>(18)</sup>. (T.12, p.268 a 26-28)

The counterpart in the Sanskrit version is the 17<sup>th</sup> vow which is as follows.

sacen me bhagavan bodhiprāptasya nāprameyeṣu buddhakṣetreṣv aprameyāsaṃkhyeyā buddhā bhagavanto nāmadheyam parikīrtayeyur na varṇam bhāṣeran na praśaṃsām abhyudīrayayeyur na samudīrayeyur mā tāvad aham anuttarām samyaksambodhim abhisambudhyeyam |17|<sup>(19)</sup>

According to the above comparison, we can understand the following points.

- (1) The 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* consists of three items, which relatively match the second part of those 129 special characters of the Dharmākara narrative in the *Da amituo jing*, and the 17<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing*.
- (2) Although the 17<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing* also consists of two parts, much like the 4<sup>th</sup> vow in the *Da amituo jing*, there is no equivalent text found in the Dharmākara narrative of the *Pingdengjue jing*. Considering the formation of the Dharmākara narrative of the *Da amituo jing*,<sup>(20)</sup> it is hard to believe that the 17<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing* is a genuine translation from the Indian text of the *Pingdengjue jing*, but rather just a copy of the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* with a slight revising.
- (3) Regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing*, although it is hard to determine whether there is anything matching it in the original Indian text of the *Da amituo jing*, no one can deny that the doctrine of “hearing the Amitābha’s name” found in the 4<sup>th</sup> vow is something purposely highlighted by the translator, on the basis of the corresponding relationship between this vow and the second part of those 129 characters found in the Dharmākara narrative. The two of them exactly correspond to each other, and those 129 characters must have been purposely compiled by the translator of the *Da amituo jing*.

In summary, the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* is not a genuine translation from the original Indian text of the *Da amituo jing*, but rather it was purposely compiled by the translator. By no means do I deny that the doctrine of “hearing Amitābha’s name” exists in the original Indian text of the *Da amituo jing* because another possibility can be considered; that the original form of the vows appearing in the origi-

nal Indian text of the *Da amituo jing* is simply matching the system of the forty-eight vows found in the extant Sanskrit version. At least, we can determine that the doctrine of “hearing Amitābha’s name” plays an important role in terms of self-benefit and benefit for others, something intentionally emphasized in the *Da amituo jing*.

## 2.2 The 5<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing*

One of special characteristics is that there have been three vows constituting the three-grade system of rebirth in the *Da amituo jing*. These three vows are: the 7<sup>th</sup> vow which concerns the higher grade of rebirth; the 6<sup>th</sup> vow which concerns the middle grade; the 5<sup>th</sup> vow which concerns the lower grade of rebirth. These three vows appear only in the *Da amituo jing*, but unexpectedly disappeared in the later versions of the Larger *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha*. In my recent publications, I undertook a research on the three grades of aspirants through a comparative study between these three vows and their fulfillments.<sup>(21)</sup> In this paper, I would like to undertake a discussion on the 5<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* through a different perspective, focusing on the doctrine of “hearing Amitābha’s name” through a comparative study between the 5<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* and its counterpart in other versions. The 5<sup>th</sup> vow concerns peoples who committed evil karma in their previous lives but are also able to be reborn in the Land of Amitābha. According to ŌTA, the 5<sup>th</sup> vow in the *Da amituo jing* matches the 19<sup>th</sup> vow in the *Pingdengjue jing*; the 20<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Wuliangshou jing* and the *Rulaihui*; and the 19<sup>th</sup> vow of the Sanskrit version. The term *wenwo mingzi* 聞我名字 (Sanskrit: *mama nāmadheyam śrutvā*) appears in all of them. The 5<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* reads as follows.

【大阿】第五願：使某作佛時，令八方、上下諸無央數天人民，及蝸飛蠕動之類，若前世作惡，聞我名字，欲來生我國者，即便反政自悔過，為道作善，便持經戒，願欲生我國不斷絕。壽終皆令不復泥犁、禽獸、薜荔，即生我國，在心所願。得是願乃作佛，不得是願終不作佛。<sup>(22)</sup>  
(T.12, p.301 b 14-20)

The counterpart in the *Pingdengjue jing* is the 19<sup>th</sup> vow which reads as follows.

【清淨】十九、我作佛時，他方佛國人民前世為惡，聞我名字及正為道欲來生我國，壽終皆令不復更三惡道，則生我國在心所願；不爾者，我不作佛。<sup>(23)</sup> (T.12, p.281 c 06-09)

The counterpart in the *Wuliangshou jing* is the 20<sup>th</sup> vow which reads as follows.

【無量】設我得佛，十方眾生聞我名號係念我國，殖諸德本、至心迴向欲生我國，不果遂者，

不取正覺。<sup>(24)</sup> (T.12, p.268 b 03-05)

The counterpart in the *Rulaihui* is the 20<sup>th</sup> vow which reads as follows.

【如來】若我成佛，無量國中所有眾生聞說我名，以己善根迴向極樂。若不生者，不取菩提。<sup>(25)</sup> (T.11, p.94 a 01-02)

The counterpart in the Sanskrit version is the 19<sup>th</sup> vow which reads as follows.

sacen me bhagavan bodhiprāptasyāprameyāsaṃkhyeyeṣu buddhakṣetreṣu ye sattva mama nāmad-  
heyam śrutvā tatra buddhakṣetre cittam preṣayeyur upapattaye kuśalamūlāni ca pariṇāmayeyus te ca  
tatra buddhakṣetre nopapadyerann antaśo daśabhiś cittotpādaparivartaiḥ sthāpayitvānantaryakāriṇaḥ  
saddharmapratikṣepāvaraṇāvṛtāṃś ca sattvān mā tāvad aham anuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim abhisam-  
buddhyeyam |19|<sup>(26)</sup>

The 5<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* is one of three significant vows regarding rebirth in Amitābha-land.<sup>(27)</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> vow concerns people who committed evils in their previous lives but are also able to be reborn in the land of Amitābha through their cultivation of good deeds along with hearing Amitābha's name. Although the 19<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing* corresponds to the 5<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* with a slight revising, there is no counterpart of the 7<sup>th</sup> vow, regarding the higher grade, and the 6<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing*, regarding the lower grade, found in the *Pingdengjue jing*. That is to say, the vows regarding the higher grade and middle grade are not found in the *Pingdengjue jing*, and only the lower grade of aspirants, the object of the 19<sup>th</sup> vow, appears in the *Pingdengjue jing*. Accordingly, it is hard to believe that the 19<sup>th</sup> vow is a genuine translation from the Indian text of the *Pingdengjue jing*, but rather a copy of the 5<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* with a slight revising. This conclusion quite corresponds with the conclusion regarding the formation of the 5<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing*, which I discussed in my recent paper.<sup>(28)</sup>

### 3. Hearing the names of the Buddha and two bodhisattvas in the *Guanjing*

In addition to the Larger *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* sūtra, the doctrine of “hearing the names of the Buddha and the two bodhisattvas” also plays an important role in the *Guanjing*.<sup>(29)</sup> The most significant difference between the Larger *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* sūtra and the *Guanjing*, in terms of the doctrine of “hearing the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas”, is that the two bodhisattvas, *Guan-yin* and *Dashzhi* 大勢至, play an important role equivalent to that of Buddha Amitābha in the *Guanjing*. In all versions of the

Larger *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha sūtra*, the bodhisattva *Guanyin* plays a minor role in contrast to Amitābha Buddha. The following table shows how many times the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas appear in the different versions of the Larger *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha sūtra* and the *Guanjing*.

Table 1

Versions of the <i>LSukh</i>	The names of the buddha	The name of the bodhisattvas
大阿	阿彌陀 (175 times)	蓋樓亘 (3 times) 摩訶那鉢 (3 times)
清淨	無量清淨 (234 times) 阿彌陀 (9 times)	盧樓亘 (5 times) 摩訶那 (5 times)
無量	無量壽 (33 times)	觀世音 (2 times) 大勢至 (2 times)
如來	無量壽 (33 times) 阿彌陀 (1 times)	觀自在 (1 times) 大勢至 (1 times)
莊嚴	無量壽 (39 times)	觀自在 (3 times) 大精進 (1 times)
Sanskrit	<i>Amitābha/Amitāyus</i>	Avalokiteśvara (2 times) Mahāsthāmaprāpta (2 times)
觀經	阿彌陀 (13 times) ／無量壽 (20 times)	觀世音 (25 times) 大勢至 (23 times)

According to the table above, in the *Guanjing* the two bodhisattvas, *Guanshiyin* 觀世音 along with *Dashizhi*, play an important role which is equivalent to that of the Buddha.<sup>(30)</sup> The names of the two bodhisattvas even appear in the title of this sūtra as follows.

【觀經】爾時阿難，即從座起，前白佛言：“世尊！當何名此經？此法之要，當云何受持？”佛告阿難：“此經名《觀極樂國土無量壽佛觀世音菩薩大勢至菩薩》，亦名《淨除業障生諸佛前》。汝等受持，無令忘失！行此三昧者，現身得見無量壽佛及二大士。若善男子及善女人但聞佛名、二菩薩名，除無量劫生死之罪，何況憶念！”<sup>(31)</sup> (T.12 p.346 b 04-12)

Accordingly, the names of the Buddha and bodhisattvas have two characteristics: attainment of rebirth and extinguishing evil karma simply through “hearing the names of the Buddha and the two great bodhisattvas.”

In addition, it is of interest that a short paragraph<sup>(32)</sup> containing the bodhisattva *Guanyin* found in the *Da amituo jing* is similar both in structure and in meaning to the paragraph above in the *Guanjing*. This short paragraph is as follows.

【大阿】佛言：“世間人民，若善男子，善女人，若有急恐怖縣官事者，但自歸命是蓋樓亘菩

薩，摩訶那鉢菩薩所，無不得解脫者。<sup>(33)</sup> (T 12, p.308 b 19-22)

In the *Da amituo jing*, good men and good women<sup>(34)</sup> are those who aspire to be reborn in Amitābha's land through the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection, especially through abiding by the ascetic precepts, while hearing the Buddha's name.

In the *Guanjing*, not only do the aspirants hear the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, but if someone only hears the names of the Dharma, the monks and the Three Treasures, he will also be able to be reborn in Amitābha's land. The passage regarding the lowest level of the lowest grade is as follows.

【觀經】下品上生者，或有眾生作眾惡業，雖不誹謗方等經典，如此愚人，多造惡法，無有慚愧，命欲終時遇善知識，為讀大乘十二部經首題名字。以聞如是諸經名故，除却千劫極重惡業。智者復教合掌叉手，稱南無阿彌陀佛。稱佛名故，除五十億劫生死之罪。爾時彼佛，即遣化佛，化觀世音，化大勢至，至行者前，讚言：“善哉！善男子！汝稱佛名故諸罪消滅，我來迎汝。”作是語已，行者即見化佛光明，遍滿其室，見已歡喜，即便命終。乘寶蓮花，隨化佛後，生寶池中，經七七日蓮花乃敷。當花敷時，大悲觀世音菩薩，及大勢至菩薩，放大光明，住其人前，為說甚深十二部經。聞已信解，發無上道心。經十小劫，具百法明門，得入初地；是名下品上生者；得聞佛名、法名及聞僧名，聞三寶名即得往生。<sup>(35)</sup> (T.12, p.345 c)

There are some connections between the lowest grade of rebirth in the *Guan-jing* and the 5<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing*. The following points need to be noted.

Firstly, rebirth by reciting the Buddha's name, *Nanmo amituofo* 南無阿彌陀佛, is regarded as one of the most crucial characteristics in the *Guan-jing*. On the other hand, the words 南無阿彌陀 also appear three times in the *Da amituo jing*. In the later part of the *Da amituo jing*, the words, *Namo amituo sanyesanfotan* 南無阿彌陀三耶三佛檀, appear three times in the passages where Śākyamuni Buddha teaches Ānanda to visualize the Buddha by praising the name of Amitābha.<sup>(36)</sup> That is to say, aspirants can be reborn by reciting the name of the Buddha in the *Guanjing*. But in the *Da amituo jing*, Ānanda fulfilled the visualization of Amitābha through reciting the Buddha's name, *Namo amituo sanyesanfotan*.

Secondly, the 5<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* concerns the fact that the lower grade of aspirants, who committed evils in their previous lives, can be reborn through hearing the name of the Buddha and cultivating of good deeds. On the other hand, the lowest grade of rebirth in the *Guanjing* addresses those who committed various evil acts and teaches that they can be reborn by hearing the name of the Buddha, or bodhisattvas, or the Dharma, etc., or by reciting the name of the Buddha, *Namo amituofo*.



### Conclusion

The following conclusions can be reached based on the above investigation:

Firstly, those special 129 characters found in the Dharmākara narrative consist of two parts. The first part focuses on the benefit for Dharmākara himself (self-benefit); the second part focuses on the benefit for others through “hearing the name of Amitābha” along with visualizing Amitābha’s measureless brilliance.

Secondly, there have been two vows containing the words “聞我名字”, the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> vows, in the *Da amituo jing*. Although they both have a counterpart in the *Pingdengjue jing*, it does not mean that these two vows are genuine translations from an Indian text of the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*. Although the 17<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing* quite corresponds to the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing*, those 129 characters do not appear in the Dharmākara narrative of the *Pingdengjue jing*. Accordingly, the 17<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing* is just a copy from the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing*. The 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* quite corresponds to the second part of those 129 characters found in the Dharmākara narrative of the *Da amituo jing*. The 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing* which is the same in content as those special characters must have purposely been compiled by the translator of the *Da amituo jing*. The intention of the translator in doing so is to highlight the importance of “hearing the Buddha’s name.” The 5<sup>th</sup> vow is another one of the vows containing the words *Wenwo mingzi* “聞我名字” (Jp. *Monga myōji*) in the *Da amituo jing*. This vow is also one that was purposely edited by the Chinese translator. The intention of the translator in doing so is to highlight the fact that those who committed evil acts in their previous lives also be reborn through the cultivation of good deeds along with hearing the Buddha’s name.

The doctrine of “hearing the name of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas” frequently appears in the *Guanjing*. Not only the name of the Buddha, but the names of the two bodhisattvas, the names of the sūtras and the Dharmas, play significant roles in the *Guanjing*. There are some connections between the passages regarding the lowest grade of rebirth in the *Guanjing* and the 5<sup>th</sup> vow (including its fulfilment, the lower grade of rebirth) of the *Da amituo jing*.

Owing to space constrains, the doctrine of “hearing the dharma” in the two sūtras, and the connection between “hearing Amitābha’s name” and visualizing “Amitābha’s measureless brilliance” cannot be considered here in detail, even though I hope to do so in a subsequent paper.

### Endonotes

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- (1) Two studies in this field need to be mentioned here, one is by ŌTA (2000, re-edited based on his first version published in 1990), the other by ADACHI (2001).

(1) Regarding ŌTA's discussion, it focuses on the doctrine of "hearing the Buddha's name" found in the later recension of the Larger *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* sūtra. And his research is based on the prerequisite that the *Da amituo jing* represents the earliest form of the Indian text of the Larger *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* sūtra. He outlined the vows containing the doctrine of "hearing the Buddha's names in the versions of the Larger *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* sūtra as follows: (i) in the *Da amituo jing*, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> vows; (ii) in the *Wuliang qingjing pingdengjue jing* 無量清淨平等覺經 (T.361, hereafter the *Pingdengjue jing*, or siglum: 清淨), the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> vows; (iii) in the *Foshuo wuliangshou jing* 佛說無量壽經 (T.360, hereafter the *Wuliangshou jing*), Nos. 20, 34, 35, 36, 37, and 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, and 47, 48 vows; (iv) in the *Wuliangshou rulaihui* 無量壽如來會 (T.310.5, hereafter the *Rulaihui*), Nos. 18, 20, 34, 35, 36, 37, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48 vows; (v) in the Sanskrit version, Nos. 18, 19, 34, 35, 36, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47 vows ((ŌTA 2000, pp.249-310).

(2) Regarding ADACHI's research, there are at least two shortcomings: firstly, it appears that the doctrine of "hearing Amitābha's name" found in the *Da amituo jing* has not been fully investigated in detail; secondly, the characteristics of the two vows, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, containing "hearing the Buddha's name" found in the *Pingdengjue jing* have just been roughly mentioned, instead of being discussed in detail because of their importance.

(3) Undoubtedly, the two scholars' researches were undertaken on the basis of the assumption which the *Da amituo jing* is a genuine translation from the original Indian text.

- (2) For the most crucial characteristics of the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO 2017 a, pp.3-13; and 2017 b.
- (3) It is worth noting that Amitābha's name appears in diverse forms in the Larger/ Smaller *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* sūtras and the *Guan wuliangshou fo jing*. For example, (i) in the *Pingdengjue jing*, the name of the Buddha has been revised as *Wuliang qingjing* 無量清淨 "measureless purity" in the *Pingdengjue jing*, along with nine times of *Amituo* 阿彌陀; (ii) in the *Wuliangshou jing*, the Buddha's name is *Wuliangshou* 無量壽; (iii) in the *Rulaihui*, the Buddha's name is *Wuliangshou* and *Amituo* 阿彌陀. For the origin of *Wuliang qingjing*, see XIAO 2012.
- (4) See XIAO (forthcoming a).
- (5) See FUJITA 2011, pp. iii-xi.
- (6) The bodhisattvas indicate two significant bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara (Ch. *Guan-yin* 觀音) and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Ch. *Da shizhi* 大勢至). The names of these two bodhisattvas also appear in diverse forms in the Pure Land sūtras. For example, in the *Da amituo jing*, these two bodhisattvas are labelled as *Gailouxuan* 蓋樓亘 and *Mohenabo* 摩訶那鉢; in the *Pingdengjue jing*, these two bodhisattvas are named *elouxuan* 盧樓亘 and *Mohena* 摩訶那; in the *Wuliangshou jing*, these two bodhisattvas are labelled as *Guanshiyin* 觀世音, *Dashizhi* 大勢至 etc.
- (7) Owing to space constrains, this paper focuses on the two earliest versions of the Larger *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* sūtra, the *Da amituo jing* and the *Pingdengjue jing*, and the *Guanjing*.
- (8) This might be tentatively translated as follows: "(1) I aspire to attain Buddhahood by cultivating the Bodhisattva path to perfection. When I attain Buddhahood, among all Buddhas in the eight quarters, as well as above and below, may I become foremost in sublime wisdom and bravery, and may brilliance shine from my head as immeasurable as the Buddhas' light. (2) May my land abound with the seven natural jewels, extremely soft and excellent. When I attain Buddhahood, my name will be taught, and all beings, in measureless Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, as well as above and below, will know my name. All beings in the measureless heavens and all species that flit and wriggle who are reborn in my land, will become bodhisattvas and arhats. The bodhisattvas and arhats in my country are measureless, beyond the number of those in other Buddhas-lands. How may I be able to realize this aspiration?" See XIAO 2014, p.60. Regarding the corresponding relationships between these special 129 characters and the vows of the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO 2015, pp.19-21. For a further discussion regarding these significant 129 characters and the vows of the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO (forthcoming a and b).

- (9) The term *cixin* 慈心 is one of the special terms found in the *Da amituo jing*, appearing 18 times. For example, in the 24<sup>th</sup> vow, a similar syntax appears, which reads: 見我光明,莫不慈心作善 “when they visualize my light, they all cultivate good deeds with compassionate mind.”
- (10) The Fourth Vow, (I) When I attain Buddhahood, may my name (*Amituo*) be heard in the measureless Buddha-Lands of the eight quarters, as well as above and below, and (II) may all Buddhas respectively praise my virtues and admirable land to the multitudinous monks. (III) And may the devas, people, and species that flit and wriggle, having heard my name (*Amituo*), rejoice, leap cheerfully, and be reborn in my land. If I can not fulfill this aspiration, may I not attain Buddhahood. The phrase 蜎飛蠕動 corresponds to the Sanskrit term *sarva-sattva*, see KARASHIMA 1999, p.138, n. 14.
- (11) See KAGAWA 1984, pp.118-119. There has not been a counterpart found in the *Dacheng wuliangshou zhuangyanjing* 大乘無量壽莊嚴經 (T.12, No.363, hereafter the *Zhuangyan jing*, or *siglum*: 莊嚴).
- (12) There has not been a counterpart found in the *Zhuanyan jing*. See KAGAWA 1984, pp.118-121.
- (13) See ŌTA, pp.54-55.
- (14) For example, the 2<sup>nd</sup> vow of this version consists of five items. See XIAO 2017 a, p.9.
- (15) For this kind of two-fold corresponding relationships of the vows in the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO 2014, pp.59-62.
- (16) The Seventeenth Vow, (I) When I attain Buddhahood, may my name be heard in the measureless Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, above and below, and may the Buddhas respectively praise my merits and the great virtues of my land to their pupils. (II) The devas, peoples, and species that flit and wriggle, having heard my name will all leap cheerfully and be reborn in my land. If I can not fulfill this aspiration, may I not attain Buddhahood.
- (17) If, when I attain Buddhahood, innumerable Buddhas in the land of the ten quarters should not all praise and glorify my Name, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment (INAGAKI 1995, p.34). The counterpart in the *Rulaihui* is the 17<sup>th</sup> vow, which reads: 【如來】若我成佛，彼無量剎中無數諸佛不共諮嗟稱歎我國者，不取正覺。(T.12, p.93 c 20-21) “When I attain Buddhahood, Buddhas in the measureless Buddhas’ Lands should not praise and glorify my land, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.”
- (18) If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my Name, even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offences and abuse the right Dharma. (INAGAKI 1995, p.34). The counterpart of this vow in the *Rulaihui* is the 18<sup>th</sup> vow, which reads: 【如來】若我證得無上覺時，餘佛剎中諸有情類聞我名已，所有善根心心迴向願生我國，乃至十念若不生者，不取菩提；唯除造無間惡業、誹謗正法及諸聖人 (T.12, p.93 c 22-25)。
- (19) FUJITA 2011, p.17. For a Japanese translation, see FUJITA 2015, pp.77-78. An English translation by GÓMEZ is as follows. Blessed One, may I not awaken to unsurpassable, perfect, full awakening if, after I attain awakening, an unlimited, countless number of buddhas, blessed ones, in an unlimited number of buddha-fields, will not extol my name, will not sing its praises, will not announce and proclaim its glory (GÓMEZ 1996).
- (20) Regarding the formation of the Dharmākara narrative of the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO 2015.
- (21) For the formation of the three-grade system of rebirth in the Larger *Sukhāvāṭīyūha*, see XIAO 2017 a.
- (22) This might be tentatively translated as follows: The Fifth Vow: When I attain Buddhahood, if people and sentient beings, even species that flit and wriggle in the measureless Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, as well as above and below, who committed evils in their previous lives, hear my name and aspire to be reborn in my land, instantly correct their actions and confess their mistakes, cultivate the Buddha-dharma and good merits, and, adhere to the Buddhist precepts, and constantly aspire to be reborn in my land, they will not be reborn into the realm of hell, birds and beasts, but will instantly be reborn in my land in accordance with their aspiration when they die. If I do not fulfill this vow: may I not attain Buddhahood.
- (23) The Nineteenth Vow: When I attain Buddhahood, if people in other Buddha-lands, who committed evils in their

- previous lives, hear my name and my cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection, and aspire to be reborn in my land, after death, they will not be reborn in the three evil realms, but will instantly be reborn in my land in accordance with their aspiration. If I do not fulfill this vow, may I not attain Buddhahood.
- (24) An English by INAGAKI is as follows: If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters who, having heard my Name, concentrate their thoughts on my land, plant roots of virtue, and sincerely transfer their merits towards my land with a desire to be born there, should not eventually fulfill their aspiration, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment (INAGAKI 1995, p.16).
- (25) This might be tentatively translated as follows: “If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the measureless Buddha-lands who, having heard my name, transfer their merits produced through their roots of virtue towards the Land of bliss, should not be reborn in that land, may I not attain Enlightenment.”
- (26) FUJITA 2011, p.18. An English translation by GÓMEZ is as follows: Blessed One, may I not awaken to unsurpassable, perfect, full awakening if, after I attain awakening, living beings in unlimited, countless numbers of buddha-fields will hear my name, will set their minds on being reborn in my buddha-field and dedicate their roots of merit to rebirth in it, and yet not be reborn in my buddha-field. And this will be true even if they have made the resolution only ten times—except in the case of those who have committed the five offenses entailing immediate retribution and of those who are hindered by their own opposition to the Good Dharma (see GÓMEZ 1996, p.71).
- (27) For a discussion on the formation of these vows, see XIAO 2017 a, b.
- (28) It is hard to believe that this notion is derived from the original text in the Larger *Sukāvatīvyūha* sūtra, but rather represents the translator’s own ideas. The intention of the translation was to highlight the importance of the cultivation of good merit and abstinence from committing evils (XIAO 2017 b, pp.83-84). It is noteworthy that although the 18<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing* is regarded as matching the 7<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing*, it is just a revision of the 7<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Da amituo jing*. Accordingly, it is hard to say that the 18<sup>th</sup> vow of the *Pingdengjue jing* is the one concerning the higher grade because there is no vow matching the middle grade in those of the *Pingdengjue jing*.
- (29) Regarding the formation of the *Guanjing*, see FUJITA 1985, pp.29-62; and SUEKI 1985, pp.165-179, and 1992, pp.22-38. In addition, I also undertook a preliminary study of the connections between the three-grade system of rebirth found in the *Da amituo jing* and the nine-grade system of rebirth found in the *Guanjing* through the following eight aspects. At there are something of connections between the two sūtras in eight aspects, which are: (1) the relationship between the three-grade system of rebirth in the *Da amituo jing* and the nine-grade system of rebirth in the *Guanjing*; (2) the three acts of virtue for attaining rebirth and the *Da amituo jing*; (3) the highest level of the highest grade; (4) the middle grade of rebirth; (5) the lowest grade of rebirth (people who committed evils); (6) *Guan-yin* in the *Guanjing*; (7) chanting *Amituo*’s name; and: (8) the prediction of Vaidehī and her five hundred female attendants (see XIAO 2017 c). In this paper, I would like to reconsider (6) and (7) in terms of “hearing the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas.”
- (30) It is worth noting that the Buddha holds two names, *amituo* 阿彌陀 and *wuliang shou* 無量壽, which presents a certain distribution regularities as pointed out by YAMADA (see YAMADA 1984, p.xxi).
- (31) An English translation by INAGAKI is as follows: “Then Ānanda rose from his seat, stepped forward, and said to the Buddha, ‘World-Honored One, what should we call this sutra and how should we receive and retain the essentials of its teaching?’ The Buddha answered, ‘Ānanda, this sutra is called the Visualization of the Land of Utmost Bliss of the Buddha Amitāyus, and of the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. It is also called the Purification and Elimination of Karmic Hindrances for Attaining Birth in the Presence of All the Buddhas. Hold fast to this sutra and do not forget it. Those who practice this *samādhi* will be able to see, during their lifetime, the Buddha Amitāyus Buddha and the two *mahāsattvas*. . . . . If good men or women simply hear the Name of this Buddha or the names of those two bodhisattvas, the evil karma which they have committed during innumer-

able *kalpas* will be extinguished. And so, how much more merit will they acquire if they concentrate on them! You should know that all who are mindful of that Buddha are like white lotus flowers among humankind; the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta become their good friends. They will sit in the place of Enlightenment and be born into the family of the Buddhas.” (INAGAKI 1995, pp.117-118)

- (32) For the formation of the three short paragraphs containing the name of the bodhisattva *Guan-ying* (蓋樓亘) in the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO 2016.
- (33) An English translation by NATTIER is as follows: “The Buddha said, “If the people of this world, good men or good women, find themselves in trouble and are frightened in dealings with local officials, they should simply take refuge in this bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and in the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and they will all be saved.” (NATTIER 2007, p.198) For the formation of the three short paragraphs containing the bodhisattva *Guan-ying* (蓋樓亘) in the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO 2016. In conclusion, I indicated that this short paragraph is a creation of the Chinese translator of the *Da amituo jing* in order to encourage, and protect the aspirants who pursue rebirth in the Land of Amitābha through the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection, the six *pāramitās*.
- (34) The term 善男子、善女人 is one of the special terms found in the *Da amituo jing* which deserves a detailed discussion in detail in a subsequent paper.
- (35) The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehī, “Those who attain birth on the highest level of the lowest grade are the sentient beings who commit various evil acts but do not slander the Mahayana sutras of greater scope. When a foolish person such as this, who has committed much evil but feels no remorse, is about to die, he may meet a good teacher, who praises the titles of the twelve divisions of the Mahayana scriptures. By hearing these sutra titles, he is released from the burden of evil karma which he has accumulated during a thousand kalpas. Furthermore, this wise teacher advises him to join his palms and call, ‘Homage to Amitāyus Buddha [*Namo omituofo*].’ Calling the Name of the Buddha extinguishes the evil karma that the dying person has committed during fifty *koṭis* of *kalpas*. “The Buddha then sends his transformed body and those of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta to the aspirants, saying, ‘Well done, person of good deeds! By calling the Name of the Buddha your evil karma has been extinguished, and so we have come to welcome you.’ When these words are uttered, the aspirant sees a flood of light from that transformed Buddha fill his room. Having seen this, he rejoices and dies. Seated on a jeweled lotus flower, he follows the transformed buddha and is born on a jeweled pond. In seven weeks the lotus bud opens and Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of great compassion, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva appear before him, releasing great floods of light and explain to him the extremely profound teachings of the twelve divisions of the scriptures. Having heard these, the aspirant accepts them in faith, and awakens aspiration for the highest Enlightenment. After ten smaller *kalpas*, he acquires clear understanding of one hundred dharmas and enters the first stage of a bodhisattva. Such a person is called one who attains birth on the highest level of the lowest grade. Thus he is born by hearing the Name of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha—that is, the Three Treasures” (INAGAKI 1995, pp.83-84).
- (36) The context reads: 佛言: ‘若起, 更被袈裟西向拜, 當日所沒處, 為阿彌陀佛作禮, 以頭著地言: “南無阿彌陀三耶三佛檀。”’ 阿難言: ‘諾! 受教。即起, 更被袈裟西向拜, 當日所沒處, 為彌陀佛作禮, 以頭腦著地言: ‘南無阿彌陀三耶三佛檀。’ (T.12, p.316 b 26-c 01) The Buddha said: “Stand up, take on your robe and facing towards the west where the sun sets, worship Amitābha Buddha with your head touching the ground and saying: ‘*Namo amituo sanyesanfotan*.’ Ānanda said: ‘Yes, I understand and will do it in accordance with your teaching.’ Then he instantly stood up, took on his robe, worshipped facing towards the west where the sun sets, and knelt down in homage to Amitābha Buddha, his forehead touching the ground, saying: ‘*Namo amituo sanyesanfotan*.’”

#### ABBREVIATION

HD = *Hanyu dacidian* 漢語大詞典, 13 vols. Shanghai, *Hanyu dacidian chubanshe* 漢語大辭典出版社.

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